Sermons for the Christian Year

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SERMONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

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PEACE IN SEARCH OF MAKERS

By The Revd M. F. Camroux, MA,
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Epiphany 4 – Matthew 5:1–12: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.'

The words are marvellous but exactly what kind of peace is it we are to seek? The minister was greeting the congregation at the door at the end of the service. A successful businessman in his fifties came up to him. He shook the minister's hand and then looked across at the Church notice-board where there were posters about apartheid and about the arms race. 'Some of us think we're getting a little too political round here,' he said. 'What do you mean?' asked the minister, who actually knew exactly what he meant. 'All this stuff about ending apartheid and the arms race. It just divides people. We ought to stick to the things we can agree on. The Church is a place where we ought to be able to find a little peace.'

That is one idea of peace. It's the peace when you get away from the tensions and turn your back on the conflict. It's what we look for on holiday, a chance to opt out of the stresses and forget the world has problems. Like the man in the television commercial, who was in utter despair until he discovered that happiness is a cigar called Hamlet. The world may be just as bad but he feels fine.

Is the peacemaker one who gets us away from our problems? Is Church the place where you forget there are problems outside? Is the peacemaker the one who never raises her voice, never speaks an angry word, never touches a controversial issue? Hardly so in the Bible. 2,700 years ago the prophet Micah stood up for justice (Micah 6:8). In a time when the ruling elite 'abhor justice and pervert all equity', when they 'tear the skin off my people, and the flesh off their bones' what knowing God means is to 'do justice, and love kindness and walk humbly with your God'. In the same situation Amos boils with anger at those who use religion as an escape from the challenge of people's needs. 'I take no pleasure in your sacred ceremonies. Spare me the sound of your songs . . . Instead let justice flow on like a river and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.' In like manner Jeremiah warns of those who say peace, peace where there is no peace.

If you want to see a peacemaker look at Jesus. He tells his hometown church that he had come to set at liberty those who were oppressed and so infuriates everyone that they chase him out of the synagogue and try to kill him. Later he storms through the Temple. 'Scripture says my house shall be a house of prayer but you have made it a robbers cave.' It is this confrontation with the exploitative priestly elite which marks him out for the cross. What kind of peacemaker you might ask is this?

The point is this – in the Bible peace is not something negative, what you have when you are quiet. It is something positive – what you have when all is well, when relationships are right, when justice reigns. If you want a vision of peace listen to Micah 4 speaking of the time when 'they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore'. Or read Isaiah 11 with its picture of the time when the wolf and the lamb will lie down together and when 'they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain'. Martin Luther King puts it like this 'True peace is not merely the absence of tension, but it is the presence of justice'.

In the Old Testament the word for peace is Shalom. It means favour, and fullness and richness, and justice and joy, all at the same time. It is when everything is as it ought to be. That is why the Messiah is identified in prophecy as 'Wonderful counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'

The peacemaker is one who works for the time when justice and peace join hands. The peacemaker seeks to solve the fundamental problems and so bring deep lasting peace. The peacemaker is not someone who slips away from the problem, but an active doer who seeks to achieve peace for all.

There's a wonderful distinction that the old Presbyterian theologian John Oman used to draw which illuminates this whole matter – that between the peaceable man or woman and the peacemaker. The peaceable man or woman is the one who takes as his motto the words of Al Capone 'We don't want no trouble.' It was a peaceable man who once said that he hated to see women having to stand on the underground. 'What do you do about it?' he was asked. 'Oh,' he said, 'I close my eyes.' The peacemaker however is the one who works for justice. John Oman put it like this: The peaceable man or woman is the one who 'would run the risk of malaria in the future, rather than disturb the cesspools of the present'. The peacemaker is the person 'who has no toleration for the world's cesspools, who knows that an undisturbed wrong of any kind is the place where the pestilence breeds . . . He is no peacemaker who has no iron in his blood, no hot word of indignation at fitting times on his tongue'.

If this is right, if the peacemaker is the one who is concerned to face the fundamental problems – then peacemaking must lead into conflict, not out of it.

When I think of a peacemaker I think of Alan Boesak. Alan Boesak was a Reformed Church minister in the apartheid period. One day the coloured area in which he was ordained was declared white and bulldozed to the ground. One of the older women whose home was being destroyed came to him and said, 'Look I'm 65 and my husband is older than I am. Now at this stage in our lives we have to move. What are we going to do? How are we going to start again? I want you to preach about this. I want to know what God is saying about this.'

What do you do when faced with a challenge like that? What does the peacemaker do? Is there an option? Says Dr Boesak, 'That was the first sermon when I tried to grapple with the political reality as it touched the life of my people.' If today there is a possibility of racial harmony in South Africa it is because people like Alan Boesak knew they had to be peacemakers.

When I think of peacemaking I think of Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu, Jim Wallis, Terry Waite, Trevor Huddleston, David Shepherd, William Sloane Coffin. I think of people who buy Traidcraft coffee. I think of people who belong to the World Development Movement Group or Friends of the Earth. I think of people who write letters for Amnesty, cut sandwiches for the homeless. These in their own way all know that Christian peace is not opting out but opting in. It is making a contribution to the struggle for human wholeness in a broken world. Such people, said Jesus, will be called children of God. The sons and daughters of the great one, the one who desires peace and fullness in the world.

CHRIST'S CROSS – GOD'S WISDOM

By the Revd Colin Sedgwick, MA, MTh, Kenton, Middlesex

Epiphany 5 – 1 Corinthians 2:1–12

What use is a preacher *who can't preach?* Not a lot! Who wants to bother with wisdom *which is nonsense?* No-one! What can be achieved by power *which is weak?* Nothing! And yet . . .

These paradoxes are at the heart of Paul's argument at the beginning of 1 Corinthians. Possibly a little bruised from seeming failure in sophisticated, intellectual Athens, his approach in corrupt, cosmopolitan Corinth (Acts 18) was simplicity itself: straightforward speech, with no hint of rhetorical polish; a one-dimensional message, the cross of Christ; and a dependence on no earthly power, but on that of God alone.

Extraordinarily, it *worked*! The gospel of Christ took root and spread. And 2,000 years later it continues to grip people's lives and turn them into new men and women.

Has there ever been a time when the Western world has been more like first-century Corinth? I live in London, with its bewildering array of races, religions, cultures, life-styles. Sometimes I am tempted to despair of the gospel ever making an impact on the teeming masses of people all around. But, without lapsing into complacency, I reflect upon the Corinth-like nature of the city, and I take hope: if the gospel could make that impact then, why not now?

But it will never happen if we fail to take hold of the lessons Paul learned at Corinth and outlined in 1 Corinthians 2.

First, *if our message is not meaningful to the most ordinary person who hears us, then it isn't the authentic gospel.* Two people emerged from church after hearing a preacher renowned for his erudition. 'My word, that man really is deep!' said one. To which the other replied, 'Yes indeed! I couldn't understand a word he said!' Such a comment could never have been made about Paul. 'Christ and him crucified' – that was his message. If the sophisticated Greeks found it laughable, and the sensation-seeking Jews found it offensive – so be it. 'I am authorized to preach no other message', Paul would have said.

There is a word here both for us who preach and for those who listen. We preachers need to recognize the danger of allowing our theological expertise (in itself a perfectly good thing) to cut us off from the very people we are called to serve. It would do many of us no harm to be required to explain the essence of the Christian message in no more than five minutes to a completely 'unchurched' outsider. Such an exercise might keep us on our toes.

And the word for those who listen? Very simply: tell us! Don't spare us! Keep us up to the mark, or, to put it better perhaps, down to earth. Insist that the uniquely Christian note of divine mercy, grace and forgiveness through the cross of Christ is sounded again and again. Whatever else we may be offering the world, if we aren't offering that we are betraying our calling – and, more to the point, short-changing our hearers.

Second, *avoid like the plague the pre-occupation with 'image'.* Paul had no shortage of rivals in the public speaking realm; oratory was highly prized among the Greeks. Those who practised it had their neat turns of phrase, their mannerisms and gestures, their verbal tricks and witticisms. They were, in the bad sense of the word (there is of course a good sense), thorough 'professionals'.

But not Paul. 'I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words . . .' (v. 3). As if to say: I couldn't care a scrap how impressively I came across or what sort of reputation I might build up.

Drive down any freeway in America and you will see hoardings advertising preachers. Invariably they are young (or, at least, made to seem so); they are good-looking, smart-suited, clean-cut; their facial expressions exude sincerity and noble-mindedness. I must be careful: God forbid that I should seem to condemn men who may well be people of the utmost Christian integrity; but it is hard sometimes to avoid the impression that an awful lot of thought (not to mention money) has gone into presentation and appearance: in a word, into *image.*

Not that there is any excuse for scruffiness in appearance or sloppiness in speech: no 'dumbing down', please! But in a world which has become obsessed by image – just look at people as diverse as film stars and politicians – the Christian evangelist should run a mile from any suggestion of over-varnishing the exterior. What you see is what you get: so it was with Jesus; so with Paul and the apostles; so it should be with us. Quite apart from anything else, people aren't stupid: if they don't see through us straight away, it's only a matter of time before they will.

Third, *don't be embarrassed by the message.* To speak, as sometimes we do, of 'the simple gospel' may give the impression that what we have to offer is essentially childish. But Paul is keen to deny this: 'We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature . . .' (v. 6).

Precisely what he means here is open to question. Is this 'message of wisdom' that same simple gospel? and are the 'mature' those ordinary people who have come to accept and glory in it? Or is Paul speaking of a deeper level of teaching reserved for the theologically advanced? The experts differ. But my impression is that Paul is speaking of the basic gospel. His whole point, after all, is that what seems to the outside world foolish and naive is in reality the very wisdom of almighty God: for is not the foolishness of God wiser than men (1:25)? The problem is that men and women – even the so-called great and good – cannot see this wisdom when it is staring them in the face: 'if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory' (v. 8).

No, we have nothing to be ashamed of or embarrassed about in our message. The cross, for all its barbarism, represents the zenith of divine wisdom.

And this leads to the fourth lesson: *have the faith to believe in a power of which the world knows nothing!* Oh yes, some of those orators had a truly persuasive power; but what actual good was accomplished by their efforts? The extraordinary thing about the gospel (says Paul) is that it is validated and authenticated not by any certificate from an academy or any panel of human judges, but

›y a very 'demonstration of the Spirit's power' (v. .). To borrow an expression from elsewhere in Paul, he gospel is 'the power of God for the salvation of veryone who believes'.

If only we could grasp this! This simple, rough, ıpside down message of God coming in human form o live among us and die for us is the most powerful veapon in the church's armour[y. But if *we* can't see t, how can we expect those outside to do so? Lord, ›pen our eyes!

DOUBTS AND QUESTIONS

By the Revd Dr T. Mervyn Willshaw, Lichfield, Staffs.

.ent 1 – Matthew 4:1–11

)onald Baillie was one of the foremost Scottish heologians of the twentieth century. Many who read ıim found him an inspiration, not only for his ntellectual brilliance but for his spiritual quality too. Yet, when he died, his brother John disclosed, in a ommemorative essay, that Donald was prone to ›eriods of intense doubt. He used to say, 'When the larkness is on me, I walk down the street, and see ›eople walking aimlessly about, and shops and cars nd a few dogs, and it all seems to mean nothing nd to matter not at all.'

Doubts and questions are at least as much a part ›f the Christian life as assurance and confidence. ›aints and scholars are as afflicted by them as the ıewest and most immature believer. While we are equired to live by faith, it will always be so, for loubt is not the opposite of faith. Sight is.

The gospels tell us that Jesus himself had to face esting. At the beginning of his ministry, says Matthew, he had a marvellous confirming experi- nce. He heard a voice saying, 'This is my Son'. But he next voice was one which raised a question ıbout his status. 'If you are the Son of God, then . .' On this occasion he won a victory for faith but t was not the end of the war. However much the vangelists try to suggest that Jesus took command ›f things at the end and went bravely and confidently o his death, they dare not overlook the cry of lesolation, 'My God, my God, why hast thou orsaken me?'

The important thing, therefore, is not to be too urprised or alarmed by our doubt but to know how to deal with it. The story of the temptations may help us with that.

I

Jesus was hungry and was tempted to satisfy his hunger by turning stones into bread. It would fulfil two purposes. His physical need would be met and the word spoken at his baptism would be confirmed.

For centuries miracles were seen as powerful weapons in the apologist's armoury. Here was clear evidence of God's reality. Who but God could do such things?

The argument is not so often heard now. It is seriously flawed. The stress on miracles leaves us with a very strange God, capricious, inconsistent and trivial. This God feeds five thousand who have missed a meal but does nothing about Auschwitz or Hiroshima. This God rescues disciples on a lake but allows a Zeebrugge to happen.

Moreover, this God is apparently confined to the extraordinary and occasional whereas surely the God in whom we live, move and have our being is to be found in the ordinary and at all times, in the centre of life and not merely on its fringes. Too much stress on miracles reduces God to an occasional invader of the world rather than its omnipresent creator and sustainer.

Miracles are always ambiguous. Another explanation for them is always possible. No miracle offers conclusive evidence of divine activity. Jesus rejected the temptation to trust in external evidences and so must we.

II

The second temptation was to make the most of his privileged position and enjoy its consolations.

Most of us fall for this one. Preachers often encourage us to do so. We are invited to embrace faith because it brings peace, happiness, meaning, wholeness and health. Sometimes, at least, it works. There are fringe benefits to knowing God.

A hundred years or so ago, William James investigated testimony about religious experience in order to assess its value and, despite his own lack of religious conviction, came to positive conclusions. They were published in his book, *Varieties of Religious Experience*. He wrote, 'Religion brings a new zest for life – an assurance of safety, peace and love for others.' But that does not mean that the fringe benefits guarantee the truth of the religion.

The disconcerting finding of William James was that it did not seem to matter what people believed, what their brand of religion was. All religions had the same effect and that suggests that what made the difference was the believers' confidence in their faith rather than any external or objective reality. The danger here, therefore, is that religion may be reduced to auto-suggestion.

In any case, the best religion does not necessarily make us feel good. It can be very uncomfortable for it lays upon us demands, which are enormously costly. It requires us, for example, to live not just by the Golden Rule or accepted standards of decency and consideration but by grace and self-sacrifice.

Jesus' commitment to God led him to the cross and to the cry of dereliction. It may be that the more profound your faith and commitment are, the less at ease you will be.

In any case, there is something unsatisfactory and immature about concentration on the consolations of religion. True faith does not treat God as a means to an end but as an end in Godself. Jesus knows that he may not use God for his own ends.

So the justification of our faith is not to be found in external evidences or in internal effects.

III

The devil has made a blatant appeal to wonders and self-interest. But it is not here that God is to be known. So where? Is God an illusion, after all?

Perhaps the third temptation, the most difficult to understand, is an appeal to be hard-headed and worldly wise, to stop living in a fantasy world and accept life as it is. Why not be realistic and live by the commonsense values and style of the worldly? So Jesus is tempted to compromise, to accept the ambitions and interests of the people around him, which will surely make him popular.

But this only has to be stated to be recognized for the practical atheism it is. To yield to this temptation is to refuse the risk of faith, to succumb to the idea that a God who hides is a God who does not exist.

Jesus rejected all three temptations. What was he left with? The God who had called him to commitment and who, in his baptism, had assured him that he was indeed God's Son.

We know God first as the one who makes a claim upon our lives. That knowledge is confirmed only as we commit ourselves. God is the focus of all that we own to be the meaning and purpose of life, the inner substance and value of all that moves us to gratitude.

I cannot prove that the values I seek to live by have a transcendent grounding but neither can I shake off the conviction that they do. These are not values that I have opted for so much as values that claim me.

As I go about the world, I am struck by the fact that what makes it work, what makes life possible at all for us, is a quality of co-operation, self-giving and generosity which theologians call 'grace'.

We see it operating in a thousand ways everyday and usually take it for granted. Like oil in an engine, we only notice it when it is not there. But occasionally it bursts out in spectacular ways and opens up entirely fresh possibilities for the world's life, as it did in the Jesus-event. But in whatever ways we encounter it, it is the stuff of life, the value which above all others claims us, and if we are sensitive, points us to God.

When we dare to yield and live by it, we find its truth confirmed again and again in experience.

QUESTIONING AND UNQUESTIONING FAITH

By the Revd Peter G Jarvis, Exeter

Lent 2 – Genesis 12:1–4a; John 3:1–17

Part 1: Abraham

God said 'go' and he went. He and his wife were living contentedly in Northern Mesopotamia. They were getting on in years, and their one disappointment was that they were childless; but at least they belonged to an extended family. Then suddenly, apparently out of the blue, God spoke. I like the peremptory 'Get thee out' of the AV, but the NIV will do: 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.' God was telling him to migrate, to relinquish his civilized life and become a nomad, to quit the familiar place and the familiar people and embark on a journey into the unknown. Abraham didn't argue with God or question the validity of the call. He simply did as he was told. As the writer to the Hebrews put it: 'By faith Abraham obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.' He abandoned the security of the present and

accepted the insecurity of the future – the hazards of travelling to an unknown destination, and the culture shock of finding himself in a foreign land among an alien people. Yet he did so with unquestioning faith, because he believed God's promise that he, a childless man, would be the father of a great nation, a nation which would prove a blessing to all mankind.

Was this a piece of wishful thinking on his part? Was he suffering from delusions of grandeur? Or was he a silly old fool afflicted with late onset wanderlust, and determined to have a final fling?

Well, the promise did eventually come true. Abraham fathered Isaac, though everyone assumed he and his wife were past it. And long after Abraham's death, the Jewish people proliferated to a remarkable extent, and despite persecution and attempts to exterminate them, have profoundly affected human history. From them have come prophets, teachers, seers; scientists, philosophers, artists, musicians; and of course, from them came Jesus. But was God behind this astonishing story?

That – like the very existence of God – can neither be proved nor disproved. It is a matter of faith or unfaith, of belief or unbelief. Even classic spiritual experiences recorded in the Bible – Abraham's call, Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush, Isaiah's vision in the temple, etc. – could be dismissed as self-deceptions of one kind or another. But which do you opt for? Were they genuine incursions from beyond, God making his presence felt, or were they merely projections of the human mind, products of the human imagination? Abraham was to question God later in the story, but the story began with an act of unquestioning faith. Abraham earned his name, father of the faithful, and is rightly revered by Jews, by Christians, and by Moslems. I wish my faith in God was as firm and unwavering as his, that I heard God's call as clearly, and obeyed it as promptly!

Part II: Nicodemus

He represents a questioning faith. He wondered what to believe. 'He came to Jesus by night.' Why? Perhaps he didn't want it to be known that he, a pillar of society, proud of his orthodoxy, had visited the prophet from Galilee, who certainly wasn't orthodox and might even be heretical. Or perhaps John was indicating that Nicodemus was very much in the dark, in a state of intellectual perplexity and spiritual bafflement. Nicodemus was impressed by the deeds of Jesus, the signs and wonders he performed, but was more doubtful about the words of Jesus: parables which came to some alarming conclusions, and unfair attacks on the scribes and Pharisees. He was a Pharisee himself. But Jesus treated this particular Pharisee as an honest man making honest enquiries, not as an undercover agent trying to catch him out. Jesus sensed that Nicodemus was too set in his ways and needed a considerable shake-up if he were to make any spiritual progress. Like Abraham, stuck in Haran, Nicodemus needed to hear the call to travel into unknown territory – in his case not a literal journey but a new look at life, leading to a change of heart and mind, and perhaps to some agonizing reappraisals. Like many orthodox people, Nicodemus thought he'd arrived – he'd got his religion, his theology, his lifestyle sorted out. No wonder he found Jesus disturbing.

In effect, Jesus told him: 'You've got to start all over again, you've got to be reborn, if you're ever to see the kingdom of God.' I don't think Jesus was trying to frighten Nicodemus ('if you don't watch out you'll never get to heaven and might even go to hell!'), nor that he wanted to make him feel guilty or ashamed. I think he wanted to open Nicodemus' eyes to life's infinite possibilities and potentialities, encouraging him to see life as a gift of God which is meant to be enjoyed to the full. Nicodemus was puzzled by all this, especially the bit about starting afresh – at his time of life too! 'How can a man be born when he is old?' You can't teach an old dog new tricks! His pharisaic faith, time-honoured, traditional, and with everything sewn up, was good enough for him. So he questioned the necessity for any change. But Jesus hammered home the message that he must open his whole being to the Spirit of God, which was like a breath of fresh air, a wind, a gale, impelling people to move forward, inspiring them with renewed energy and power. As someone has said (I forget who): 'Faith isn't about coming to conclusions, but about setting out on quests.' In other words, real religion, living faith, involves a pilgrimage, always moving on, never standing still, heading for an unseen destination beyond the horizon.

How did Nicodemus react? Did this interview with Jesus make any difference? Not immediately. He doesn't seem to have become a disciple, but

evidently gave careful thought to what Jesus had said. Later in the Gospel, when his colleagues on the Jewish council referred to Jesus as a deceiver, a charlatan, Nicodemus put in a word for him: 'Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and finding out what he is actually doing?' They didn't answer the question; instead they asked, 'Are you from Galilee too?' They'd decided that since Jesus came from Galilee he couldn't possibly be a genuine prophet: prophets never came from there. Judgment by geography! Nicodemus didn't pursue the argument, but went on thinking. His conversion, if we call it that, wasn't instantaneous. It was a gradual process.

He only came out as an avowed disciple after Jesus had died. He accompanied Joseph of Arimathea to the tomb, bringing with him a large quantity of myrrh and aloes (no expense spared) to lavish on the corpse. It looked as if his conversion, his rebirth, had come too late. But no! Impressed by the life of Jesus, impressed by the death of Jesus, he must have been even more impressed by the resurrection of Jesus. We aren't told as much, but I think we can assume that Nicodemus became a member of the infant church. By the power of God, by the power of the risen Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, he had been 'born anew to a living hope' and a living faith. May that be true of us also.

A Reader's Response

The article in the August (2001) edition of the *Expository Times* by Dr Deborah F. Sawyer ['A Male Bible', pp. 366–369] provided an original slant on the way the character of Abraham may be perceived. The patriarch was portrayed not as a powerful, hegemonic male but as a son adopted by God. Leaving his natural father at Haran, Abraham was introduced to a more stringent 'filial bondage' to his father-God. For Dr Sawyer the ongoing experience of Abraham functions as a paradigm of the 'manifestation of absolute control matched by radical obedience epitomized in the father/son relationship, and this is the only relationship permissible with God. Believers, male and female alike, are forbidden maturity, autonomy, in effect they are forbidden a self-identity'.

1. This hypothesis obviously depends on the child/parent model but the imposing of this imagery on Abraham's relationship to God lacks any validation from the texts. At neither the call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3) nor in the promises made to him in the covenant of circumcision (Gen. 17:1–8) is there any hint that God has become Abraham's new father. The promise made to Abraham was that God would be his God and his descendants' God (Gen. 17:7b). The only use of the word father is applied to Abraham himself (17:5). Nowhere in Genesis is the name father used for God

2. Dr Sawyer's thesis is based on the further assumption that freedom and obedience are mutually excluding possibilities: you can be obedient or you can be free but not both. To commit oneself to obedience is to forfeit freedom. On the basis of this logic if Abraham had wished to live his own life, make his own decisions, be author of his own destiny then he had better stay away from God and the call to a life of obedience. But this contention presupposes that the call to Abraham was irresistible. Was it? Presumably a 'call' can be answered with acceptance or rejection. Abraham had to *decide* whether to leave Haran or not. He chose to follow what he believed to be a call to greatness and his place in history suggests there was nothing 'infantile' about his choice. Words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer come to mind, 'Obedience without freedom is slavery; freedom without obedience is arbitrary freewill' (*Cost of Discipleship*, p. 84).

Freedom and obedience are sometimes causally linked. When an athlete aspires to Olympic glory there are rules to learn and rigorous schedules of practice to follow but always the objective in view is that such obedience will lead to greater freedom on the track. Biblical obedience is un uncoerced call to become what we would not otherwise become.

3. Another conclusion explicitly stated in Dr Sawyer's article is that the development of an individual identity is precluded for anyone who obeys a sovereign God. Does that really follow? A quick scan of the 'obedient' people of the Hebrew Bible and those of the New Testament offers no support to the notion that obedience prevents the flourishing of a distinctive individuality.

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